

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claims 65-83, without prejudice.

Please add new claims 84-110 as follows:

1. (Original) A device for sampling or collecting comprising
 - i) a swab which is a natural or synthetic absorbent material comprising gelatine particles or collagen particles ; and
 - ii) a support fixed to said swab.

Claims 2-83. (Cancelled)

84. (New) A device for sampling or collecting comprising
 - i) a swab comprising gelatine or collagen; and
 - ii) a support attached to said swab.

85. (New) The device according to claim 84, wherein the swab is selected from the group consisting of a gelatine-based sponge, collagen-based sponge, microfibrillar gelatine or microfibrillar collagen.

86. (New) The device according to claim 84 wherein the swab is a natural or synthetic absorbent material comprising gelatine particles or collagen particles.

87. (New) The device according to claim 84, wherein the gelatine or collagen are of natural or synthetic origin.

88. (New) The device according to claim 85, wherein the gelatine-based sponge has a water absorption capacity of at least 30 g/g, or at least 40 g/g as determined by the method of Example 3.

89. (New) The device according to claim 85, wherein the gelatine-based sponge, the collagen-based sponge, the microfibrillar gelatine or the microfibrillar collagen have pores with an average pore size of about 10 nm to about 2 mm.

90. (New) The device according to claim 86, wherein the gelatine particles or collagen particles have a particle size in the range of about 1 μm to about 1 mm, from about 5 μm to about 0.5 mm, from about 5 μm to about 0.25 mm, from about 10 μm to about 0.25 mm, or from about 10 μm to about 0.1 mm.

91. (New) A kit comprising
i) a device according to claim 84; and
ii) an agent selected from the group consisting of a neutral diluent, an anti-microbial agent and a dispersion agent.

92. (New) The kit according to claim 91, wherein said neutral diluent is selected from the group consisting of saline, saline peptone, buffered saline peptone, Ringer solution and an organic or inorganic buffer.

93. (New) A method for collecting a target from a collection medium comprising making contact between the swab of the device of claim 84 and the target.

94. (New) A method for collecting a target from a collection medium comprising making contact between the swab of the kit of claim 91 and the target.

95. (New) A method of qualitatively or quantitatively sampling an area for content of a target comprising:

- i) wet sampling the area with a swab comprising a gelatine-based sponge and a support attached to the swab; and
- ii) dry sampling the area with the swab.

96. (New) The method according to any one of claims 93-95 further comprising the transfer of the target from the swab to a first transfer medium.

97. (New) A method of lowering the amount of a target in a sample area comprising making contact between the swab of the device of claim 84 and at least a portion of said sample area, so that the target adheres to the swab, said method further comprising transfer of the target from the swab to a first transfer medium.

98. (New) The method according to any one of claims 93 to 95, wherein the collection or sampling is from a collection medium selected from the group consisting of a solid or semi-solid surface, a liquid, a gas and combinations thereof.

99. (New) The method according to any one of claims 93 to 95 or 97, wherein the target is selected from the group consisting of a virus, a micro-organism, a mammalian cell and an organic molecule.

100. (New) The method according to claim 99, wherein the organic molecule is selected from the group consisting of a nucleotide, a nucleic acid, a protein and a detergent.

101. (New) The method according to claim 96, wherein the transfer comprises the digestion of the gelatine or collagen.

102. (New) The method according to claim 96, wherein the transfer comprises the washing of target from the gelatine or collagen.

103. (New) The method according to claim 101, wherein the digestion comprises the use of an agent selected from the group consisting of an enzyme, a mineral acid, a carboxylic acid, a base and combinations thereof.

104. (New) The method according to claim 101, further comprising the extraction of the target by membrane filtration.

105. (New) The method according to claim 96, further comprising the use of an agent selected from the group consisting of a neutral diluent, an anti-microbial agent, a disinfecting agent and a dispersion agent.

106. (New) The method according to claim 96, wherein said method further comprises the step of culturing the cells collected on the swab in a growth medium.

107. (New) The device according to claim 84, wherein the swab is a natural or synthetic absorbent material comprising gelatine particles.

108. (New) The device according to claim 84, wherein the gelatine or collagen originate from a mammal.

109. (New) The device according to claim 84, wherein the gelatine or collagen originate from a marine mammal.

110. (New) The device according to claim 84, wherein the gelatine or collagen originate from porcine, bovine, fish, crayfish or vegetables.